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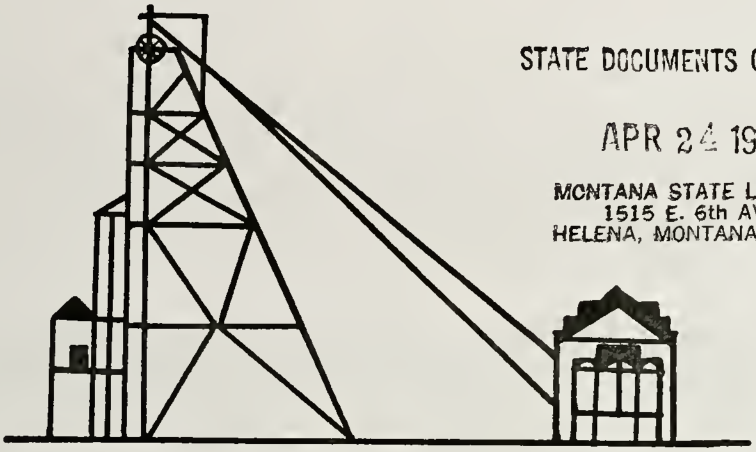

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CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY AND EVALUATION

Of Four Abandoned Coal Mine Sites in Wibaux County, Montana

for

The Montana Department of State Lands
1625 - 11th Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620

by

GCM Services, Inc.

May 1987

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Gene Munson
Cultural Resource Division
GCM Services, Inc.
P. O. Box 3047
Butte, Montana 59702

Report No. 92-5-87

May 1987

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ABSTRACT

Cultural resource inventory of four mines within the Wibaux county portion of the Fort Union Formation Coal Field of eastern Montana was conducted for the Department of State Lands (DSL) Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program The coal mines are the Shower (24WX110), Peplinski (24WX111), Gass (24WX112) and Stair (24WX113).

These four mines were in operation somewhat later than many of the small mines in eastern Montana. They generally were in operation during the late 1930s and into the early 1940s. All were small-scale "wagon" mines employing a few miners or local farmhands during the winter. They sold coal to the residents and businesses in the local area and were usually open only during the fall and winter months. Although small in scale, these mines were vitally important to the area at a time when coal was the most economical and available energy source.

Little physical evidence remains, however, at the four mine sites. Few structural remains are still on the sites and, in most cases, only debris and subsidence holes mark the area of mining activity. The physical integrity of the four sites has been destroyed or seriously impaired so that the sites no longer convey the appearance of the original mining operation. For this reason, none of the sites are recommended as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

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INTRODUCTION

In November of 1986 GCM Services, Inc. in Butte, Montana was contracted by the Montana Department of State Lands (DSL) to perform a cultural resource inventory and evaluation of selected abandoned coal and hardrock mines in Montana. In In the interest of public safety and health the DSL, as part of its abandoned mines reclamation project, plans to seal mine adits, remove any unsafe structures and either remove or reclaim tailings and coal spoil dumps.

This report presents the results of the inventory of selected mines in the Wibaux County portion of the Fort Union Formation Coal Field (Figure 1). The following report describes the physical setting, historic background and present state of the Shower Mine (24WX110), Peplinski Mine (24WX111), Gass Mine (24WX112), and Stair Mine (24WX113). Table 1 lists the mines by DSL field designation and their historical name. Table 2 provides the legal location of each mine.

Field investigations were conducted in May of 1987 by Gene Munson. The project maps were prepared by Jim Duran and the report was edited by Paul Anderson and Lynn Fredlund.

A site inventory form for each mine site makes up Appendix A. For each site there is detailed information on the existing features, a historic discussion and an evaluation of the site in terms of its contribution to the history of east central Montana. Maps and photographs supplement the written material. These site forms remain on file at the state repositories at the State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, and the Department of Anthropology, University of Montana, Missoula.

All field notes, photographs and supportive information resulting from the cultural resource fieldwork will be maintained at the office of GCM Services, Inc., Butte, Montana.

Table 1. DSL and historic names for mines.

DSL Field Designation	Historic Name	Smithsonian Number
Lamesteer	Shower	24WX110
Peplinski	Peplinski	24WX111
No. Black Diamond	Gass	24WX112
Stair	Stair	24WX113

Table 2. Legal descriptions of project mines.

Shower mine	T12N R61E	S1/2 SW1/4 NE1/4 Section 4
Peplinski mine	T12N R61E	at center of SE1/4 Section 9
Gass mine	T14N R60E	E1/2 NW1/4 SE1/4 Section 2
Stair mine	T15N R59E	NE1/4 NW1/4 SE1/4; W1/2 NE1/4 Section 2

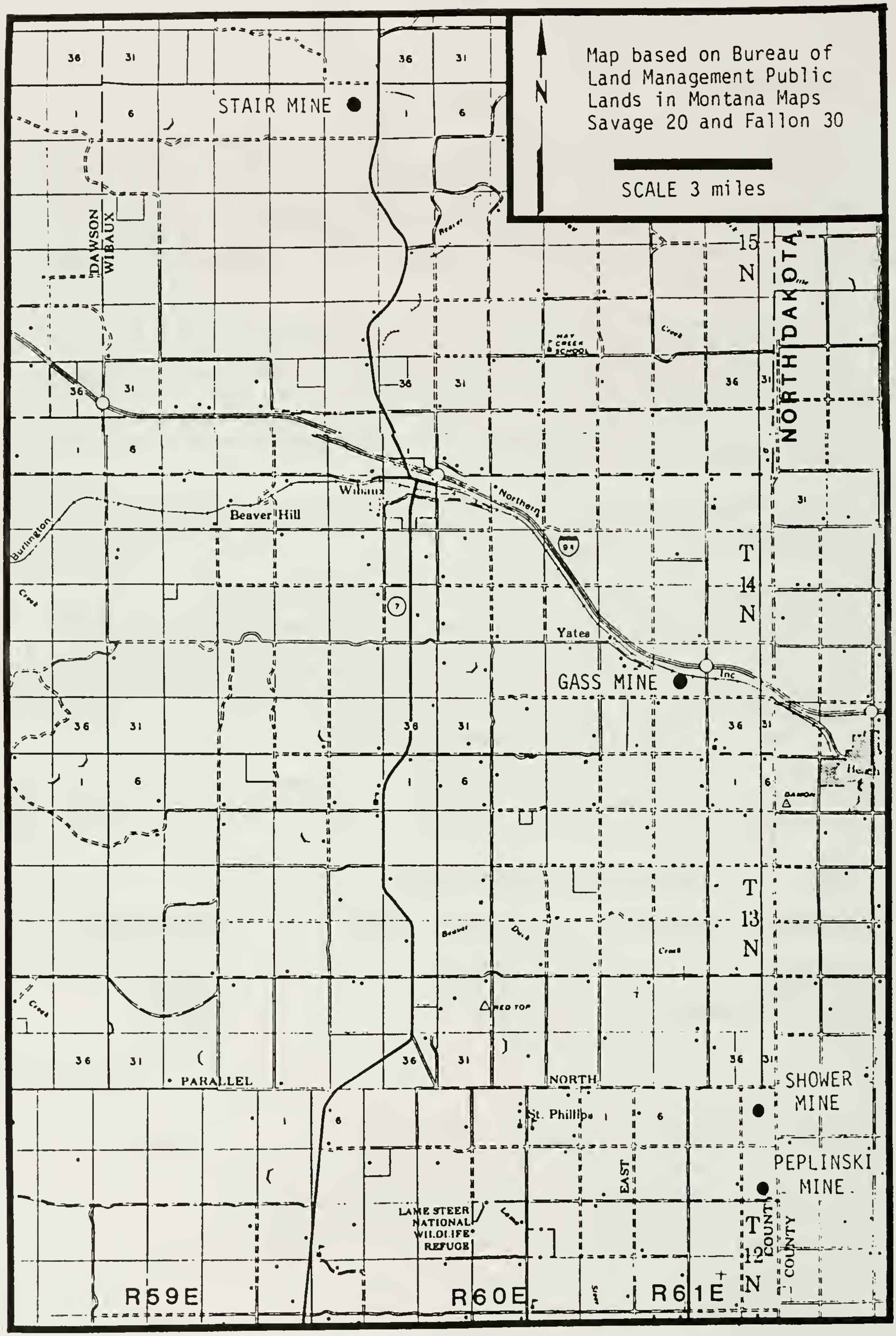

Figure 1. Map showing locations of mines inventoried.

METHODOLOGY

Prior to the initiation of fieldwork the state site files at the University of Montana, Montana Historical Society's Historic Preservation Office files, and the Historic Sites Compendium (Montana Fish and Game Commission 1975) were searched for previously recorded sites in the area. The Government Land Office records at the Bureau of Land Management's records division in Billings, Montana was consulted for relevant GLO plat maps, historic survey plat maps and historical indices showing site ownership and historical features in the vicinity.

The site areas were carefully examined through a pedestrian inventory following standard archeological survey procedures. These pedestrian surveys are designed to provide the most complete coverage of an area possible. Undisturbed areas were systematically examined for possible prehistoric activities.

The survey is designed to meet all legal requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act 1980 Amendments. The information provides all necessary data to allow agency review for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility and a determination of the effects of the proposed action.

All sites located are recorded on standard site forms and are assigned a site number by the state site files office at the University of Montana under the trinomial system of the Smithsonian Institution. Each site is examined, structures measured and a sketch map drawn showing the location of artifacts, cultural features and/or structures and their relationship to natural features within the site area.

Each site is photographed in black and white negative and color positive film. On historic sites all features and structures are photographed to show significant aspects in detail.

PHYSICAL SETTING

The portion of the Fort Union Coal Field near Wibaux is characterized by low rolling hills broken in places by buttes capped by clinker or sandstone. The Yellowstone River, 26 miles to the northwest, is the nearest major drainage. Beaver creek which flows through Wibaux drains the project area.

Payne (1973) describes the area as Northeastern Grassland which has sandy to stoney loam soils covered with blue grama, needle-and-thread and western wheat grass. Vast stretches of this grassland are now under cultivation with winter wheat and spring wheat being the principal cash crop.

GEOLOGY OF THE FORT UNION FORMATION COAL FIELD, WIBAUX COUNTY, MONTANA

Detailed investigations of coal deposits in eastern Montana were first undertaken in 1910. The large deposit of lignite near Wibaux were found to be contained mostly in the Tongue River member of the Tertiary Period Fort Union formation. The mines inventoried for this report took coal from this formation. The coal seam mined in the vicinity of Wibaux has an average thickness of 20 feet and contains about a billion tons of lignite under less than 120 feet of overburden (May 1954).

"Unweathered lignite is hard, and tough, black to brownish black and has a dark-brown streak. When exposed to air, it loses moisture and slacks readily and may eventually ignite spontaneously and burn" (May 1954:270). The numerous beds of clinker and "scoria" that cap the hills are the result of the spontaneous burning of the coal as it is exposed by erosion.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Wibaux became a county when it seceded from Dawson County in 1914. The town and county of Wibaux were named for Pierre Wibaux, a Frenchman who settled in the area in 1883. At one time he had a herd of 65,000 cattle and controlled large tracts of land in western North Dakota and eastern Montana. His main ranch was known as the W - Bar, located northeast of the town of Wibaux (McCleary 1987).

The entire history of coal mining in the vicinity of Wibaux is that of small mines which sold coal locally. The area is sparsely populated and the major industry is livestock raising and grain growing. The early geologic reports (e.g. Leonard and Smith 1908; Hance 1912) describe the coal as being mined during the fall and winter months by ranchers and settlers for their own needs. The mines were small diggings in the nearest and most convenient outcrop. The largest, and perhaps earliest, mining operation in the area was the Northern Pacific Railway mine located near Medora, North Dakota which began operations in 1884. By 1907 the mine had been abandoned and the entries had caved in (Leonard and Smith 1908).

In 1910 the only commercial mine operating in the vicinity of Wibaux was a mine near Glendive called the Snyder Mine. At this time the mine had been operating intermittently for seven years. During the summer it produced one or two wagon loads a day and in the winter as much as 50 tons per day were mined. An abandoned entry, 1000 feet long, had been driven into the hillside but an adjacent entry was being mined. The coal sold for $1.25 a ton at the mine and $3.50 a ton delivered in Glendive (Hance 1912).

In much of the area around Wibaux the coal does not outcrop along the drainages, rather it is buried several feet under ground. There were two methods of reaching such coal: one was to dig a shaft entry to it (e.g. at the Peplinski Mine and Shower Mine); and the other was to dig a trench that sloped downward to the coal seam (e.g. at the Gass Mine). Generally, only coal 40 feet or less underground was mined (Peplinski 1987; Schmitz 1987).

These small mines operated only in the fall and winter months in order to supply heating fuel to the local communities. The mines produced a few to 30 tons of coal a day (Peplinski 1987; Sokolsiki 1987).

HISTORIES OF THE STUDY GROUP MINES

The coal mines examined in this report are illustrative of a period when coal was the dominant type of fuel used for heating homes, businesses, schools, farms and ranches. During the early settlement of the area around the turn of the century, coal was virtually the only fuel available in this region where few trees grow. Even later, when fuel oil or natural gas were available, coal was still widely used since it was still the most economical fuel during the hard times of the 1930s. The Depression was a time when energy needs were met locally and by small-scale commercial enterprises. When the mines closed in the 1940s it was not because of a depletion of the resource but rather, was due to the conversion by individuals and industry to more convenient fuels such as natural gas and fuel oil. The following narratives of the individual mines are examples of these types of small commercial coal mines.

SITE NARRATIVES

Site: Shower mine (24WX110)

Historical Information: The mine opened in the fall of 1938 and closed in 1943. Shortly after the closure of the mine the tipple and headframe for hoisting the coal out of the mine were torn down, the shaft was filled in and the mine area was graded and planted with crested wheatgrass.

The mine owner was Rudy Shower although the land was owned by Pat Sokoloskis. According to Stanley Sokoloskis who worked in the mine, it was operated in the winter and employed local farm hands. Three to five men worked at the mine. The coal seam was 29 feet below the surface and was 19 feet thick. The mine took out the middle 10 to 12 feet of coal and left pillars of coal for support since no timbers were used. The underground workings went out from the shaft in all directions. There was no water in the mine.

The coal seam was mined by hand and a donkey pulled the coal car to the cage for hoisting to the surface. The hoist used for lifting the one-ton coal cars was powered by a gasoline engine. Usually the miners topped off the coal car with large chunks of coal so they would be paid for one and one-half tons of coal per car load.

The mine sold the coal to homes, schools and ranchers in the community of Wibaux (Sokoloski 1987).

Site: Peplinski Mine (24WX111)

Historical Information: The following information is from an interview with Paul Peplinski (1987) whose father, Joe Peplinski, owned the mine. The mine began operation around 1933 and closed in the early 1950s. Coal was mined in the fall and winter with as many as eight local farmhands employed as miners. The mine was opened to help supplement the family's income during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The coal seam is 40 feet below the surface so a shaft entry with a cage for hauling the coal to the surface was used. The cage measured eight feet square and the hoist for lifting the cage was powered by a gasoline engine. One-ton coal cars were placed into the cage and brought to the surface. The coal car was then rolled onto a tipple that was about 15 feet long and at least 15 feet above the ground. At the end of the tipple was a device which tipped the coal car so that the coal would slide over a set of screens into a bin. The bin held enough to fill one truck so customer's trucks could be easily loaded by driving them under the tipple where a chute would empty the entire bin load. From here the truck was driven some 50 feet east of the the tipple and weighed on a scale.

Currently, all that remains at the mine is a depression where the hoist and office were located. Adjacent to this depression is a subsidence hole where the second shaft was located. The first shaft was located about 400 feet southeast of the second shaft. Because of water in this part of the mine the first shaft was abandoned.

The method of mining was to remove the lower 10 to 12 feet of the 20-foot thick coal seam. No timbers were used for support, but rather the room-and-pillar method was used where a portion of the coal seam itself was used to support the roof. Drifts were driven with rooms placed on both sides. The underground workings extend about 500 feet north of the second shaft. There were three air shafts. Each was the diameter of a 30 gallon oil drum and the drums, with both ends cut off, were used at the top of the shaft to keep it from caving in.

A device that looked like a chain trencher (e.g., Ditchwitch) put on its side was used to undercut the coal seam. The cutter was 7 feet long and the entire machine was 12 to 14 feet long. It was powered by a gasoline engine. The coal was broken down using blasting powder with the charges being set off at the end of each day of mining. After the coal was broken loose it was loaded into coal cars drawn by a Shetland pony.

After the mine was abandoned the structures were torn down, the area cleaned up and seeded into crested wheatgrass. A pump was installed in the southeast corner of the mine and was used for irrigating the adjacent field for a number of years.

The mine was visted in 1953 by United States Geologic Survey geologist Paul May (1954). At that time the Peplinski mine was the only one still operating in the Wibaux area. A coal sample taken 150 feet north of the shaft entry showed the coal as a medium grade lignite.

Site: Gass Mine (24WX112)

Historical Information: William Gass homesteaded the property in 1912 (Pat. #199030) but did not start the mine until about 1920. The mine had a relatively long lifespan, being in operation seasonally for some 20 years, finally closing around 1940.

Robert Schmitz, the current landowner, reported the coal seam is 20 feet below the surface and a long north/south trench was dug to reach it. The north end of the trench began at the surface and sloped downward to the coal seam. A track was laid down and the coal cars were pulled to the tipple on the surface for loading into trucks. The method of mining was to remove the middle 10 feet or so of the 21-foot thick coal seam. Pillars of coal were left in the rooms for support and there was some timbering. The mine workings extended south about 300 feet, west about 400 feet and north to the creek about 500 feet. The coal seam pinches out to the west and east of the mine. Since the workings were fairly extensive, several ventilation shafts were needed.

The coal from the mine was sold locally to the communities of Wibaux, Montana and Beach, North Dakota.

In the mid-1960s the land on which the site is located was bought by the Schmitz family but no attempt was made to reopen the mine (Schmitz).

Site: Stair Mine (24WX113) .

Historical Information: The mine was started around 1935 and shut down in 1943. It operated during the winter months, employing three to four of the local farmhands. The operation was run by Emery ("E.B.") Stair.

The mine extends about 600 feet back from the adit. The lower 10 feet of the 16-foot coal seam was mined with pillars of coal left for support. At first a horse was used to pull out the coal but later a Ford tractor and a two-wheel cart were used.

For several years the mine was cited for safety violations. Stair reported to the current landowner, Stanley Wood, that the mine was issued citations by the mine inspector for storing blasting powder inside the mine in a room adjacent to the entrance. Stair said he built a powder magazine some distance from the mine but the inspector then cited the mine for having too high a level of carbon monoxide. The mine was ordered shut down until the situation was corrected but it never reopened.

Ironically, during the 1960s the mine was converted into the Wibaux County Civil Defense fallout shelter. Curiously, the shelter was designed to handle 3500 people even though only 1800 people live in Wibaux County. The entrance was modified by installing a door and new timbers while two generators were placed further inside the mine. A culvert with a ladder inside was placed in one of the ventilation shafts so it could be used as an escape route. On the surface, a radio tower was built alongside the ventilation shaft. Since the mine is damp, with water standing on its east side, a pump was installed in hopes that this would help dry out the mine. After several years of trying to dry up the mine the project was abandoned. The two generators are still in the mine.

May (1954) took a coal sample from the innermost room, about 600 feet north of the mine mouth which showed medium heating value for lignite and a rather high ash and sulfur content. The high ash content was partly caused by the one-inch parting in the lower part of the coal bed (Wood 1987)

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the course of fieldwork and research for this report the following abandoned coal mines were examined, recorded, mapped, and photographed: Shower Mine (24WX110), Peplinski Mine (24WX1111), Gass Mine (24WX112), and Stair Mine (24WX113). Historic records for the mines were researched and local informants were interviewed. The undisturbed areas of the sites were examined for prehistoric cultural resources. No prehistoric cultural remains were found on any of the sites.

The four inventoried mines were opened relatively late when compared to many other small-scale coal mining operations throughout the state. The opening of the Shower, Peplinski, and Stair mines in the 1930s was a response to the Great Depression. They were opened to supplement the reduced incomes during this economically hard-pressed era. By this time considerable mechanization was available for mining and was adapted in varying degrees at the four mine inventoried. An example is the use of an undercutting machine at the Peplinski mine, and the use of a Ford tractor and two wheeled wagon in the Stair mine.

The primary market for the coal was for household purposes. Local school districts also were big customers for the coal. The mines provided an important form of employment for farmhands during the winter months when they would have otherwise been out of work.

The Gass and Peplinski mines operated for the greatest length of time, around 20 years. The Shower and Stair mines operated for about eight years. All were operated seasonally during the fall and winter months.

After the mines were abandoned, the tipples, hoisting mechanisms, scales and other structures were torn down or removed while air shafts and adits eventually collapsed. Because of this intentional removal of structures and machinery as well as natural deterioration, very little physical evidence from the mining activities remains at the sites. Even coal spoil has all but disappeared from the Shower, Peplinski, and Gass mines. If there were no subsidence holes it would not be possible to determine that coal mines once existed at these locations.

The removal of the structures (eg., tipples, scales, etc.) associated with these coal mines has sufficiently altered the sites from their original states so they no longer possess physical integrity. Therefore, none of the four sites are recommended as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. No further work is recommended on any of the sites.

Table 3. Summary of inventory data for the coal mines recorded on this project.

Site name	Site number	Dates of operation	Major historic theme	Site Condition	Description and comments
Shower	24WX110	1936-1943	Small commercial wagon mine	Destroyed	The mine had a shaft entry to the 19 ft thick coal seam located 29 ft below the surface. The method of mining was room and pillar. Only the middle 10 ft to 12 ft of the coal was mined.
Peplinski	24WX111	c.1933 to 1943	Small commercial wagon mine	Destroyed	The mine had a shaft entry to the 20 ft thick coal seam located 40 ft below the surface. The method of mining was room and pillar. Only the lower 10 ft to 12 ft of coal was mined.
Gass	24WX112	c.1920 to c.1940	Small commercial wagon mine	Destroyed	The mine had a long sloping trench to the 21 ft thick coal seam which was 20 ft below the surface.
Stair	24WX113	c.1935 to 1943	Small commercial wagon mine	Ruins	The mine entry is on the hillside where the coal outcrops. The mine extends 600 ft north into the hill. In the 1960s the mine was modified to be Wibaux county's fall out shelter which has been abandoned.

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May, Paul R.
1954 Strippable Lignite Deposits in the Wibaux Area, Montana and North Dakota. *United States Geological Survey, Bulletin 995-G*. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

Montana Fish and Game Commission
1975 *Montana Historic Preservation Plan with Historic Sites Compendium*. Recreation and Parks Division, Montana Department of Fish and Game, Helena.

Peplinski, Paul
1987 Personal communication, May 6, south of Wibaux, Montana.

Schmitz, Bob
1987 Personal communication, May 8, Wibaux, Montana.

Sokoloski, Stanley
1987 Personal communication, May 8, Wibaux, Montana.

Wood, Stanley
1987 Personal communication, May 7, north of Wibaux, Montana.

APPENDIX A

Site Forms

DSL Field Designation	Historic Name	Site Number
Lamesteer	Shower	24WX110
Peplinski	Peplinski	24WX111
North Black Diamond	Gass	24WX112
Stair	Stair	24WX113

MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 1 Locational Information

1.1 Site number: 24WX110	1.2 Site name/field designation: Shower Mine	1.3 County: Wibaux

1.4 Township/range:

T 12N R 61E S 1/2 SW 1/4 NE 1/4 of Section 4

1.5 UTM:

Zone 13 572450 Easting 5185900 Northing

1.6 Site type: historic coal mine	1.7 Recording status & comments: Photographed, mapped and recorded

1.8 Administrative/surface ownership: Cecelia Begger South of Wibaux, Montana	1.9 Mineral ownership: 1.10 Project name: Department of State Lands Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program

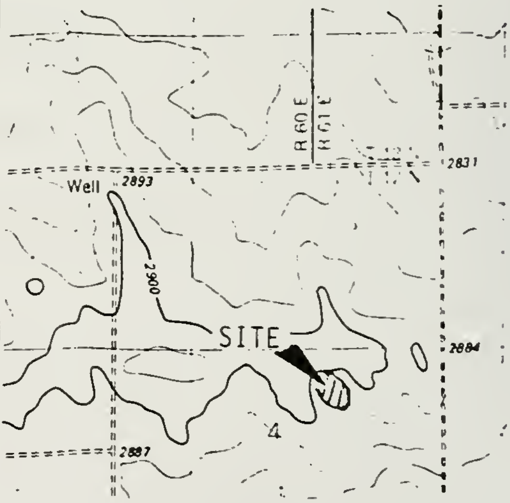
1.11 General narrative description of site:

The site consists of the remains of a small coal mine. Seven subsidence holes and a small coal spoil dump located at the head of a small drainage on the south side of a low hill are all that remain of mining activities. The mine, which supplied coal to Wibaux, was in operation during the late 1930s and early 1940s.

1.12 Map reference:
USGS 7.5 min. Duck Creek, Mont.-N.Dak Quad (1982 edition)

1.13 City/town: ☒ vicinity of
Wibaux, Montana

1.14 Access to site:
Drive east out of Wibaux for six miles on Interstate 94. Here is an off ramp. Take this exit and head south for 7-1/2 miles on a county road. Here the road turns to the west. Instead, turn east on an abandoned county road. Follow the road for one mile. Turn south onto another abandoned county road. Follow this road for one-half mile. The site is one-quarter mile to the west.



MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 2. Environmental Setting

Site number: 24WX110

2.1 Geographic setting:

2.2 Elevation: 884 m 2900 ft.

General: The site is in an area characterized as rolling plains. Numerous small drainages have cut through the Fort Union Formation's beds of clay resulting in shallow coulees some 10 m to 20 m deeper than the surrounding low hills.
Local: The site is on the south face of a low hill near the head of a small drainage which empties into Duck Creek.

2.3 View/aspect:
The view is to the southeast and this is for about 1 km.

2.4 Major drainage:
Duck Creek

2.5 Minor drainage(s):
unnamed tributary of Duck Creek

2.6 Water sources:

	Names	Distance	Ele. Change	Type & seasonality
a.	unnamed tributary of Duck Creek	250 m	12 m	ephemeral
b.				

2.7 Regional vegetation:

Northeastern grassland (Payne 1973)

2.8 Local vegetation:

plowed fields (i.e., winter and spring wheat) and crested wheat grass

2.9 Soils:
brown loam

2.10 Surface visibility/season of survey:
good/spring

2.11 Other environmental factors pertaining to site location:
The site lies within the Fort Union Formation Coal Field of eastern Montana.

MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 3 Site Assessment and Recording Documentation

Site number: 24WX110

3.1 Condition of site:
The site's condition is considered destroyed since nothing remains of the tipple, head frame, hoist or other structures that were located at the site.

3.2 Site significance (NRHP):
The site provided coal to the Wibaux community during the 1930s and early 1940s. Until the introduction of natural gas and oil, coal was virtually the only source of energy available for heating homes, schools and businesses. Coal mining also was an important local industry during the Depression of the 1930s by employing farmhands during the winter months. However, since nothing remains at the site its physical integrity has been destroyed and it is not recommended as eligible for listing on the NRHP.

3.3 Impacts:
The Department of State Lands plans to fill in the subsidence holes at the site.

3.4 Recommendations:
The site has been recorded, mapped and photographed and no further work on the site is recommended.

3.5 Site located by: Gene Munson Date: 5/6/87	3.6 Site recorded by: Gene Munson Date: 5/6/87	3.7 Revisions by: Date:

3.8 Permit No.: NA

3.9 Publications concerning site:

Munson, Gene 1987 Cultural Resource Inventory and Assessment of Selected Coal Mines in Wibaux County, Montana. GCM Services, Inc., Butte, Montana.

Payne, Gene F. 1973 Vegetative Rangeland Type in Montana. Montana Agricutural Experiment Station, Montana State University, Bozeman.

3.10 Artifact repository: none collected	3.11 Field notes/maps/photo repository: GCM Services, Inc. 1003 S. Montana St. Butte, MT 59702

3.12 Photos & accession No:

No.	Description	View
43	overview	NW
44	overview	SW
45	overview	SW

MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 5. Description of Historic Sites

Site number: 24WX110

5.1 Site dimensions, how determined: The site measures 80 m N/S x 70 m E/W. This is the area in which the subsidence holes and coal spoil is located.

5600 m²

5.2 Features:
The features consist of two posts and a footing made of concrete, a small coal spoil dump, and seven subsidence holes. The subsidence holes are from 2.5 m to 4.0 m deep and have vertical walls. The posts and footings were probably the remains of the base structure of the tipple or hoist. The shaft that was the entrance to the mine is represented by the subsidence hole located adjacent to the tipple or hoist footings.

5.3 Artifacts (observed, collected):
Artifacts consist of the remains of a Model A Ford car.

5.4 Historical information and evaluation:
The mine opened in the fall of 1938 and closed in 1943. Shortly after the closure of the mine the tipple and headframe for hoisting the coal out of the mine were torn down, the shaft was filled in and the mine area was graded and planted with crested wheatgrass.

The owner of the mine was Rudy Shower although the land was owned by Pat Sokoloskis. The mine operated in the winter and employed local farm hands. Three to five men worked at the mine. The coal seam was 29 feet below the surface and was 19 feet thick. The mine took out the middle 10 to 12 feet of coal and left pillars of coal for support since no timbers were used. The underground workings went out from the shaft in all directions. There was no water in the mine.

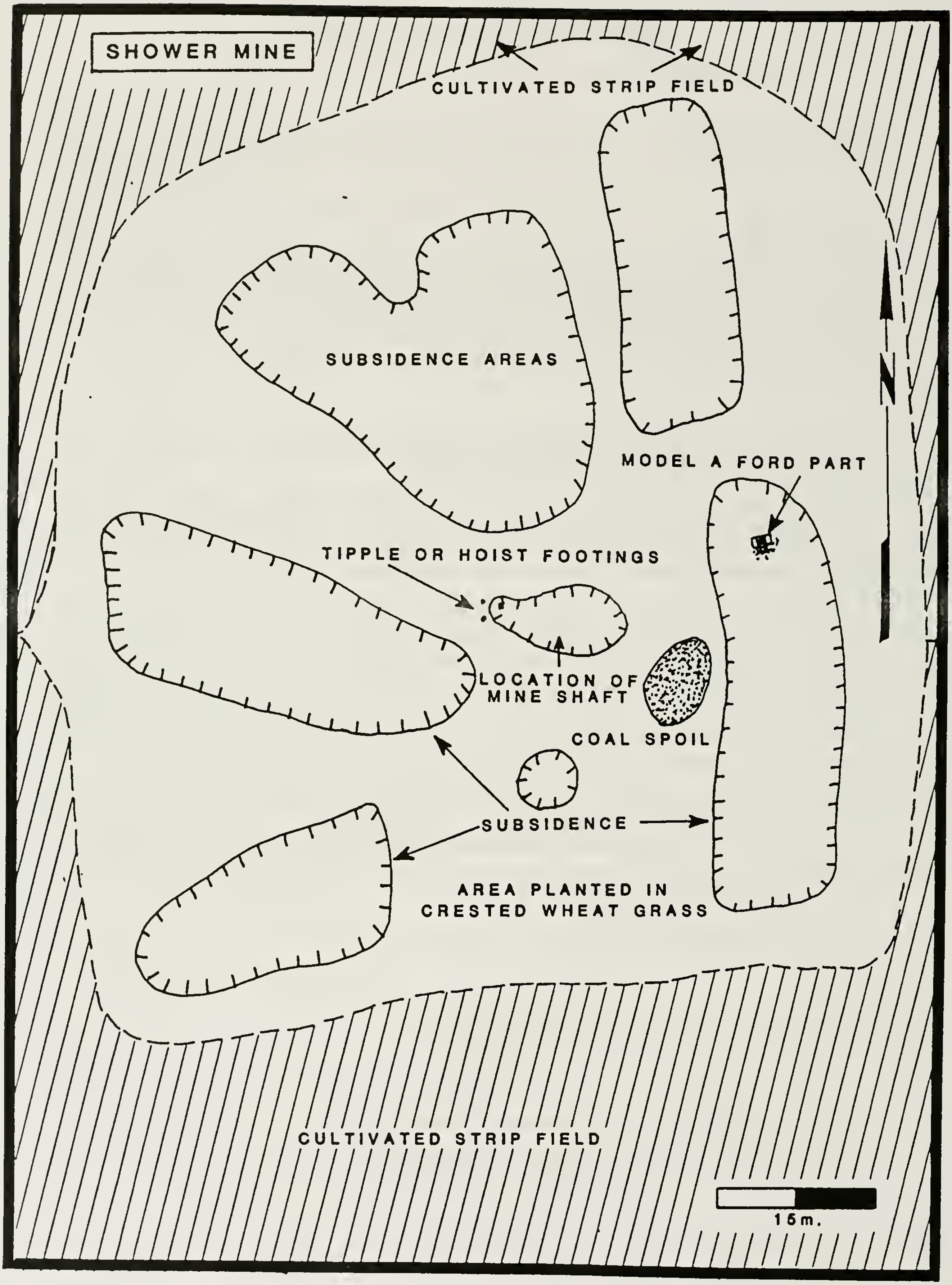
The coal seam was mined by hand and a donkey pulled the coal car to the cage for hoisting to the surface. The hoist used for lifting the one-ton coal cars was powered by a gasoline engine. Usually the miners topped off the coal car with large chunks of coal so they would be paid for one and one-half tons of coal per car load.

The mine sold the coal to homes, schools and ranchers in the community of Wibaux.

[The above historic information on the mine came from an interview with Stanley Sokoloski (1987) who worked at the mine.]

5.5 References:
(See Section 3.9)
Sokoloski, Stanley 1987 Personal interview, May 8, Wibaux, Montana.

5.6 Subsurface testing, results, methods, etc.:
None



Site map of the Shower Mine.

Overview of Shower mine (view southwest)

MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 1 Locational Information

1.1 Site number: 24WX111	1.2 Site name/field designation: Peplinski	1.3 County: Wibaux

1.4 Township/range:

T 61E R 12N at center of SE1/4 of Section 9

1.5 UTM:

Zone 13 572600 Easting 5183750 Northing

1.6 Site type: histoic coal mine	1.7 Recording status & comments: Photographed, mapped and recorded

1.8 Administrative/surface ownership: Paul Peplinski South of Wibaux, Montana	1.9 Mineral ownership:
	1.10 Project name: Department of State Lands Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program

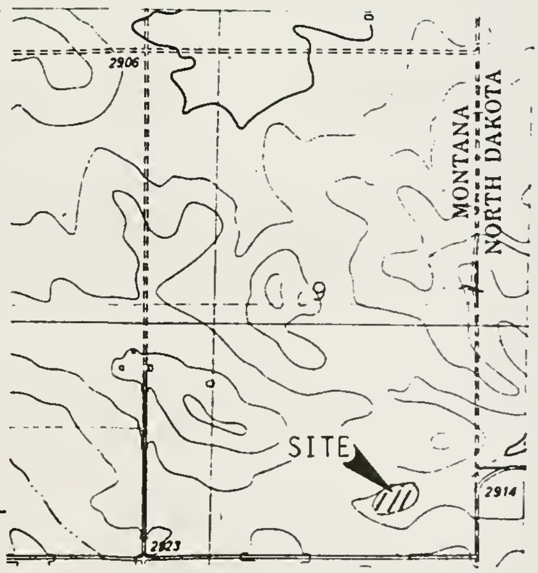
1.11 General narrative description of site:

The site is located at the head of a coulee and consists of 11 subsidence holes and a depression where the office and hoist were located. The subsidence holes are in a 83 m N/S x 193 m E/W area. The mine operated from 1933 through the early 1950s supplying coal to the local area.

1.12 Map reference:
USGS 7.5 min. Duck Creek quad (1982 edition)

1.13 City/town: ☒ vicinity of
Wibaux, Montana

1.14 Access to site:
Drive east out of Wibaux for six miles on Interstate 94 to an exit. Take the exit and head south for 9-1/2 miles on a county road. Turn east and drive for 1-1/2 miles. The site is about 1/8 mile north of the road.



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MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 2. Environmental Setting

Site number: 24WX111

2.1 Geographic setting:	2.2 Elevation: 887 m 2910 ft.

General: The site is in an area characterized by rolling plains. Numerous small drainages have cut through the Fort Union Formation's beds of clay resulting in shallow coulees some 10 m to 20 m deeper than the surrounding low hills.
Local: The mine is at the head of a small coulee which is a tributary of Duck Creek.

2.3 View/aspect:
The view is to the northeast and this is for at least 1 km.

2.4 Major drainage: Duck Creek	2.5 Minor drainage(s): unnamed tributary of Duck Creek

2.6 Water sources:

	Names	Distance	Ele. Change	Type & seasonality
a.	unnamed tributary of Duck Creek	at site	none	ephemeral
b.				

2.7 Regional vegetation:
Northeastern Grassland (Payne 1973)

2.8 Local vegetation:
Plowed fields (i.e., spring wheat and winter wheat), crested wheatgrass, cheatgrass and willows in some of the subsidence holes.

2.9 Soils:
brown loam

2.10 Surface visibility/season of survey:

good/spring

2.11 Other environmental factors pertaining to site location:
The site lies within the Fort Union Formation Coal Field of eastern Montana.

MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 3 Site Assessment and Recording Documentation

Site number: 24WX111

3.1 Condition of site:
Since nothing remains of buildings, tipple and head frame that was located at the mine, the site's condition is considered destroyed.

3.2 Site significance (NRHP):
The site provided coal to the Wibaux community during the 1930s and early 1940s. Until the introduction of natural gas and oil, coal was virtually the only source of energy available for heating homes, schools and businesses. Coal mining also was an important local industry during tne Depression of the 1930s by employing farmhands during the winter months. However, since nothing remains at the site it lacks physical integrity and it is not recommended as eligible for listing on the NRHP.

3.3 Impacts:
The Department of State Lands plans to fill in the subsidence holes at the site.

3.4 Recommendations:
The site has been recorded, mapped and photographed and no further work on the site is recommended.

3.5 Site located by: Gene Munson Date: 5/6/87	3.6 Site recorded by: Gene Munson Date: 5/6/87	3.7 Revisions by: Date:

3.8 Permit No. NA

3.9 Publications concerning site:

Munson, Gene 1987 Cultural Resource Inventory and Assessment of Selected Coal Mines in Wibaux County, Montana. GCM Services, Inc., Butte, MT.

Payne, Gene F. 1973 Vegetative Rangeland Type in Montana. Montana Agricutural Experiment Station, Montana State University, Bozeman.

May, Paul R. 1954 Strippable lignite deposits in the Wibaux area, Montana and North Dakota. In a contribution to Economic Geology. United States Geologic Bulletin 995-G. pp 255-291.

3.10 Artifact repository: NA	3.11 Field notes/maps/photo repository: GCM Services, Inc. 1003 S. Montana St. Butte, MT 59702

3.12 Photos & accession No:

No.	Description	View
36	Overview	NE
37	Subsidence hole in SE corner of site	West
38	Wagon	West
39	Overview	West
40	Subsidence hole	West
41	Overview	East

MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 5. Description of Historic Sites

Site number: 24WX111

5.1 Site dimensions, how determined:
The site measures 80 m N/S x 190 m E/W. This is the area in which the subsidence holes are located.

15,200 m2

5.2 Features:
The only historic feature at the site is a 4 m N/S x 3 m E/W depression that was where the office and hoist were located. There are twelve subsidence holes caused from the underground workings collapsing. The subsidence holes are from 2 m to 3 m deep.

5.3 Artifacts (observed, collected):
Adjacent to the depression where the office and hoist were located are pieces of a pot bellied stove and boards.

5.4 Historical information and evaluation:

The following information is from an interview with Paul Peplinski (1987) whose father, Joe Peplinski, owned the mine. The mine began operation around 1933 and closed in the early 1950s. Coal was mined in the fall and winter with as many as eight local farmhands employed as miners. The mine was opened to help supplement the family's income during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The coal seam is 40 feet below the surface so a shaft entry with a cage for hauling the coal to the surface was used. The cage measured eight feet square and the hoist for lifting the cage was powered by a gasoline engine. One-ton coal cars were placed into the cage and brought to the surface. The coal car was then rolled out onto a tipple that was about 15 feet long and at least 15 feet above the ground. At the end of the tipple was a device which tipped the coal car so that the coal would slide over a set of screens into a bin. The bin held one truck load so customer's trucks could be easily loaded by driving them under the tipple where a chute would empty the entire bin load. From here the truck was driven some 50 feet east of the the tipple and weighed on a scale.

(continued)

5.5 References:
(See Section 3.9)
Peplinski, Paul 1987 Personal communication, May 6, south of Wibaux, Montana.

5.6 Subsurface testing, results, methods, etc.

None

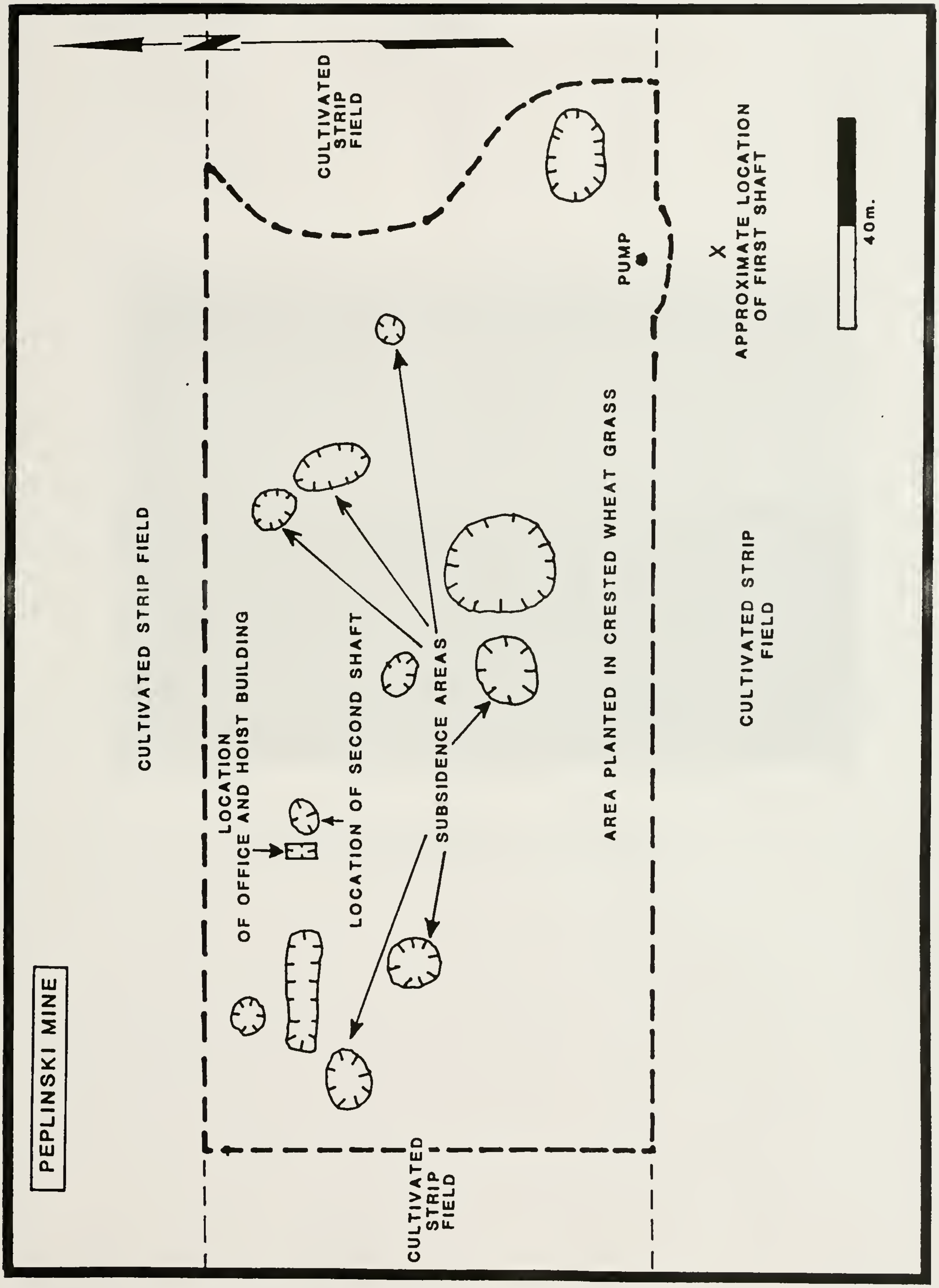
Currently, all that remains at the mine is a depression where the hoist and office were located. Adjacent to this depression is a subsidence hole where the second shaft was located. The first shaft was located about 400 feet southeast of the second shaft. Because of water in this part of the mine the first shaft was abandoned.

The method of mining was to remove the lower 10 to 12 feet of the 20 foot thick coal seam. No timbers were used for support, but rather the room-and-pillar method was used where a portion of the coal seam itself was used to support the roof. Drifts were dug with rooms placed on both sides. The underground workings extend about 500 feet north of the second shaft. There were three air shafts. Each was the diameter of a 30 gallon oil drum and the drums, with both ends cut off, were used in the the top few feet of the shaft from caving in.

A device that looked like a chain trencher (e.g., Ditchwitch) put on its side was used to undercut the coal seam. The cutter was 7 feet long and the entire machine was 12 to 14 feet long. It was powered by a gasoline engine. The coal was broken down using blasting powder with the charges being set off at the end of each day of mining. After the coal was broken loose it was loaded into coal cars drawn by a Shetland pony.

After the mine was abandoned the structures were torn down, the area cleaned up and seeded into crested wheatgrass. A pump was installed in the southeast corner of the mine and was used for irrigating the adjacent field for a number of years.

The mine was visted in 1953 by United States Geologic Survey geologist Paul May (1954). At that time the Peplinski mine was the only one still operating in the Wibaux area. A coal sample taken 150 feet north of the shaft entry showed the coal as a medium grade lignite.



Site map of the Peplinski Mine.

Overview of Peplinski mine (view east)

MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 1 Locational Information

1.1 Site number:
24WX112

1.2 Site name/field designation:
Gass Mine

1.3 County:
Wibaux

1.4 Township/range:

T 14N R 60E E1/2 SW 1/4 of Section 26

1.5 UTM:

Zone 13 569800 Easting 5198580 Northing

1.6 Site type:
coal mine

1.7 Recording status & comments:
Photographed, mapped and recorded

1.8 Administrative/surface ownership:

Florence Schmits
Beach, North Dakota

1.9 Mineral ownership:

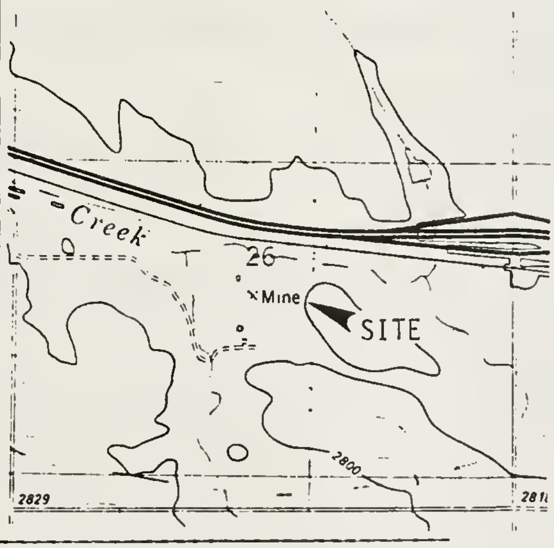
1.10 Project name:
Department of State Lands
Abandoned Mine Reclamation
Program

1.11 General narrative description of site:
The site consists of a 70 m long trench that slopes from the surface to about 4 m below the surface. At the end of the trench is a collapsed adit that was the opening to the mine. Piles of dirt from the trench are located adjacent to it. To the northwest and south of the trench are 1 m to 4 m deep subsidence holes. The mine operated from the 1920s to 1940 and was a small commercial operation which sold coal to the local communities.

1.12 Map reference:
USGS 7.5 min quad. Beach West, N.Dak.-Mont.
(1982 edition)

1.13 City/town: ☒ vicinity of
Beach, North Dakota

1.14 Access to site:
Drive west of out Beach, N.D. on Interstate 94 for 3.5 miles. The site is about 150 m south of the Interstate. It is 1-1/2 miles west of the Montana/North Dakota border.



MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 2. Environmental Setting

Site number: 24WX112

2.1 Geographic setting:

2.2 Elevation: 850 m 2790 ft.

General: The site is in an area characterized as a rolling plains. Numerous small drainages have cut through the Fort Union Formation's beds of clay resulting in shallow coulees some 10 m to 20 m deeper than the surrounding low hills.
Local: The site is on the north slope of a low hill at the confluence of two small ephemeral streams at the head of Yates Creek.

2.3 View/aspect:
View is to the northwest down Yates Creek. This is for about 1 km.

2.4 Major drainage:
Yates Creek

2.5 Minor drainage(s):

2.6 Water sources:

	Names	Distance	Ele. Change	Type & seasonality
a.	Yates Creek	40 m	4 m	ephemeral
b.				

2.7 Regional vegetation:
Northeastern Grassland (Payne 1973)

2.8 Local vegetation:
crested wheatgrass, little bluestream, and caragana

2.9 Soils:
brown loam

2.10 Surface visibility/season of survey:

good/spring

2.11 Other environmental factors pertaining to site location:
The site is located in the Fort Union Formation Coal Field of eastern Montana.

MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 3 Site Assessment and Recording Documentation

Site number: 24WX112

3.1 Condition of site:
The site's condition is considered as destroyed since the structures at the site have been torn down.

3.2 Site significance (NRHP):
The coal from this mine provided an important fuel resource that helped the development of the Wibaux, Montana and Beach, North Dakota communities during the early part of this century. However, the removal of the structures at the site, the covering of the coal spoil and seeding of the site area into crested wheatgrass has sufficiently altered the site from its original state that it is not considered as eligible for lisitng on the NRHP.

3.3 Impacts:
The Department of State Lands plans to fill in the subsidence holes at the site.

3.4 Recommendations:
The site has been recorded, mapped and photographed and no further work on the site is recommended.

3.5 Site located by: Gene Munson Date: 5/7/87	3.6 Site recorded by: Gene Munson Date: 5/7/87	3.7 Revisions by: Date:

3.8 Permit No.: N/A

3.9 Publications concerning site:

GLO Records n.d. Homestead patent information located in the Government Land Office Records, Bureau of Land Management, Billings.

Munson, Gene 1987 Cultural Resource Inventory and Assessment of Selected Coal Mines in Wibaux County, Montana. GCM Services, Inc., Butte, Montana.

Payne, Gene F. 1973 Vegetative Rangeland Type in Montana. Montana Agricutural Experiment Station, Montana State University, Bozeman.

3.10 Artifact repository: NA	3.11 Field notes/maps/photo repository: GCM Services, Inc. 1003 S. Montana St. Butte, MT 59702

3.12 Photos & accession No:

No.	Description	View
2	overview	S
3	overview	N

MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 5. Description of Historic Sites

Site number: 24WX112

5.1 Site dimensions, how determined:
The site measures 200 m N/S x 140 m E/W. This is the area in which the subsidence holes and mounds of earth left from digging the entrance to the mine are located. 28,000 m2

5.2 Features:
Features consist of an 80 m long by 8 m wide mine entrance trench, mounds of earth from digging the trench, a concrete foundation and four subsidence holes. The mine entrance runs north and south. The north end the trench begins on the surface and gradually slopes downward until at the south end it is about 4 m deep. On the south end is a collapsed adit that was an opening to the mine. Adjacent to the trench are seven mounds of earth that are assumed to be from trench. Located 55 m southwest of the south end of the trench is a 3 m north/south x 4 m east/west concrete foundation. Schmitz (1987) could not remember what was located at this feature. The four subsidence holes, the result of the underground workings collapsing, are from 2 m to 4 m in depth and have vertical walls.

5.3 Artifacts (observed, collected):
Located in the mine entrance trench and in the subsidence hole in the northwest corner of the site is historic trash, i.e., circa 1920 car parts, cans and bed springs. At the southeast corner of the site are more car parts and remains of a stove.

5.4 Historical information and evaluation:
The mine was started by William Gass around 1920. He homesteaded the property in 1912 (Pat. #199030). The mine was abandoned around 1940.

The coal seam is 20 feet below the surface and a long north/south trench was dug to reach it. The north end of the trench began at the surface and sloped downward to the coal seam. A track was laid down and the coal carts were pulled to the tipple on the surface for loading into trucks.

The method of mining was to remove the middle 10 feet or so of the 21 foot thick coal seam. Pillars of coal were left in the rooms for support. There was some timbering. The mine extended south about 300 feet from the entrance (in the area of the windbreak on the sketch map); west to the coulee which is about 400 feet from the mine entrance; and north to the creek which is about 500 feet from the mine entrance. The coal seam pinches out to the west and east of the mine. There were several ventillation shafts.

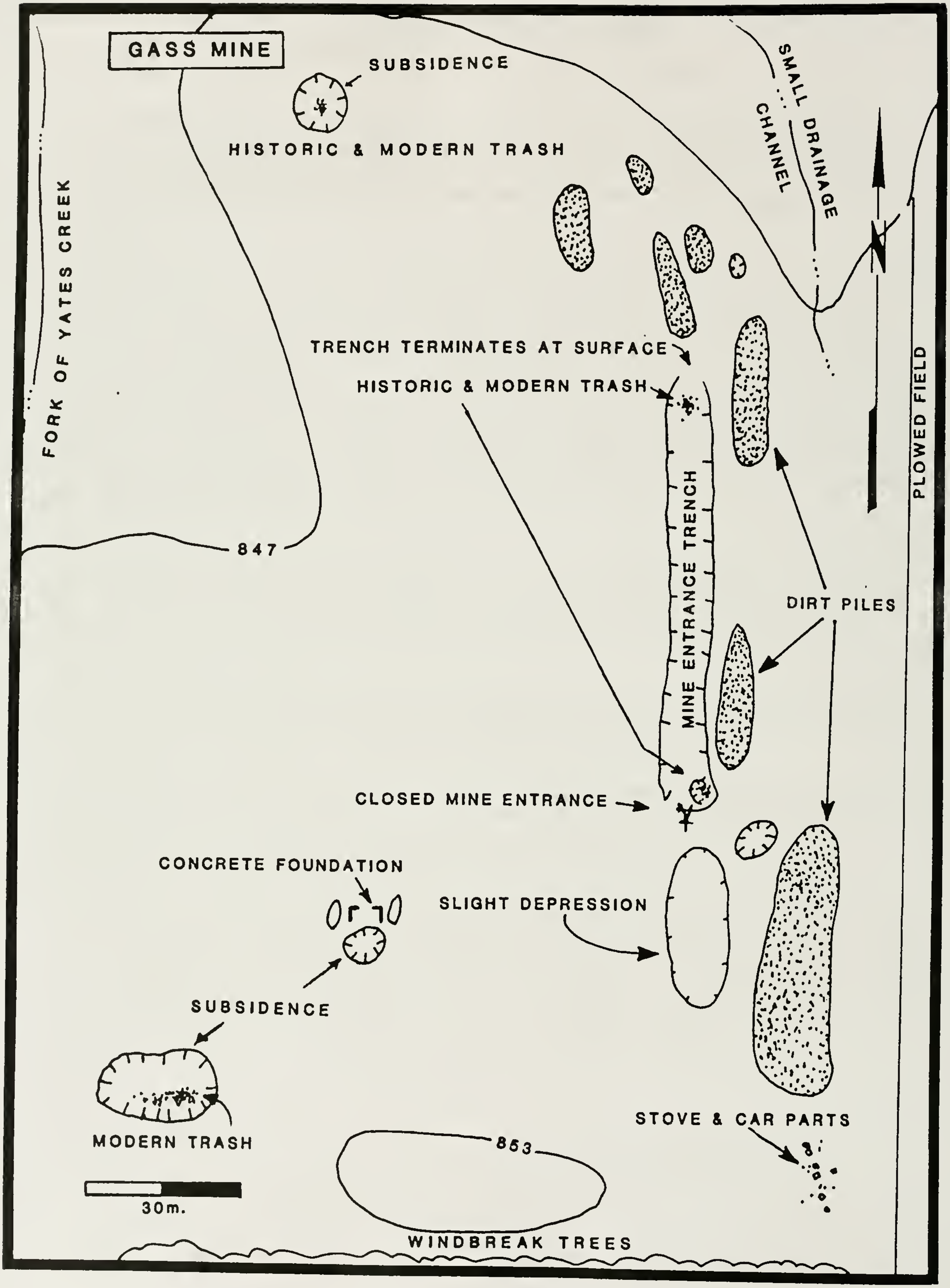
5.5 References
(See Section 3.9)
Schmitz, Bob 1987 Personal communication, May 8, Dickinson, N.D.

5.6 Subsurface testing, results, methods, etc.
None

The coal from the mine was sold locally to the communities of Wibaux, Montana and Beach, North Dakota.

In the mid-1960s the land on which the site is located was bought by the Schmitz family but no attempt was made to re-open the mine.

[The above is from a phone interview with Bob Schmitz (1987).]



Site map of the Gass Mine.

Overview of Gass Mine (view south)

MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 1 Locational Information

1.1 Site number: 24WX113	1.2 Site name/field designation: Stair Mine	1.3 County: Wibaux

1.4 Township/range:

T 15N R 59E NE 1/4 W 1/2 NW 1/4 NE 1/4 SE 1/4 of Section 2

1.5 UTM:

Zone 13 560500 Easting 5214600 Northing

1.6 Site type: coal mine	1.7 Recording status & comments: Photographed, mapped and recorded

1.8 Administrative/surface ownership: Stanley Wood North of Wibaux	1.9 Mineral ownership:
	1.10 Project name: Department of State Lands Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program

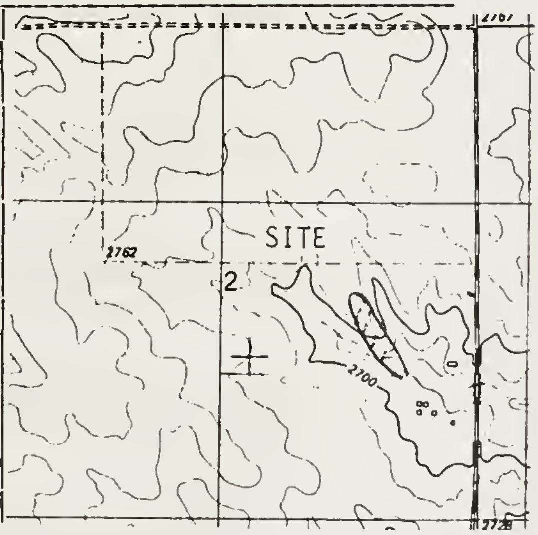
1.11 General narrative description of site:

The site is located on a low finger and consists of an open adit, a powder magazine, an open ventilation shaft, and three collapsed ventillation shafts. The mine operated from 1935 to 1943 when it was shut down by the mine inspector as unsafe.

1.12 Map reference:
USGS 7.5 min. Odland Dam SW, Mont (1982 edition)

1.13 City/town: [✓ x] vicinity of
Wibaux, Montana

1.14 Access to site:
Drive north out of Wibaux on Highway 261 for 6-1/2 miles. The site is 1/4 mile west of the road on the south facing side of a coulee.



MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 2. Environmental Setting

Site number: 24WX113

2.1 Geographic setting:

2.2 Elevation: 823 m 2700 ft.

General: The area around the site is strongly rolling hills near the edge of rough, hilly and broken topography. The drainage systems have cut 15 m to 30 m deep coulees.
Local: The adit for the mine is on the south face of a 25 m deep coulee. The mine extends into a small finger ridge which is the result of two coulees joining near the mine's adit.

2.3 View/aspect:
View is limited to the coulee and this is about 1 km to the west and east.

2.4 Major drainage:
Beaver Creek

2.5 Minor drainage(s):
unnamed drainage of Beaver Creek

2.6 Water sources:

	Names	Distance	Ele. Change	Type & seasonality
a.	unnamed drainage of Beaver Creek	at site	none	ephemeral
b.				

2.7 Regional vegetation:
Northeastern Grassland (Payne 1973)

2.8 Local vegetation:
little bluesteam, crested wheatgrass and western wheatgrass

2.9 Soils:
brown loam

2.10 Surface visibility/season of survey:
good/spring

2.11 Other environmental factors pertaining to site location:
The site is in the Fort Union Formatin Coal field of eastern Montana.

MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 3 Site Assessment and Recording Documentation

Site number:

3.1 Condition of site:
The site is considered to be in a state of ruins because of the removal of the tipple and scales and the deteriorated state of the powder magazine.

3.2 Site significance (NRHP):
The mine contributed to the local development of the Wibaux community by supplying a relatively inexpensive form of fuel for domestic use, as well as, for schools and businesses. It also was a source of employment for the local farmhands during the winter. However, with the removal of the tipple and scales, and the modification of the adit opening in the 1960s, the site no longer conveys the appearance it had when it was in operation. It is not recommended as eligible for listing on the NRHP.

3.3 Impacts:
The Department of State Lands plans to fill in the subsidence holes, seal off the ventillation shaft, remove the coal spoil and collapse the adit.

3.4 Recommendations:
The site has been recorded, mapped and photographed and no further work on the site is recommended.

3.5 Site located by: Gene Munson Date: 5/7/87	3.6 Site recorded by: Gene Munson Date: 5/7/87	3.7 Revisions by: Date:

3.8 Permit No.: NA

3.9 Publications concerning site:

Munson, Gene 1987 Cultural Resource Inventory and Assessment of Selected Coal Mines in Wibaux County, Montana. GCM Services, Inc., Butte, MT.

Payne, Gene F. 1973 Vegetative Rangeland Type in Montana. Montana Agricutural Experiment Station, Montana State University, Bozeman.

May, Paul R. Strippable lignite deposits in the Wibaux area, Montana and North Dakota. Contributions to Economic Geology. U.S.G.S Bulletin 995-G.

3.10 Artifact repository: NA	3.11 Field notes/maps/photo repository: GCM Services, Inc. 1003 S. Montana St. Butte, MT 59702

3.12 Photos & accession No:

No.	Description	View
4	subsidence holes	SW
5	overview	N
6	adit	N
7	airshaft	N

MONTANA CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

Form No. 5. Description of Historic Sites

Site number: 24WX113

5.1 Site dimensions, how determined:
The site measures 300 m NW/SE x 100 m NE/SW. This is the area in which the features are located.

33,000 m^2

5.2 Features:
The features consist of an open adit, powder magazine, coal spoil, an open ventilation shaft, subsidence holes at location of collapsed ventilation shafts and a possible "well" for pumping water out of the mine.

The adit was modified in the 1960s when the mine was converted to a Civil Defense fallout shelter. Modifications consist of a retaining wall of planks placed at the adit, new timbers and a door. At the same time the open ventilation shaft was modified by placing a 28 inch culvert in it. Inside the culvert is a ladder. The two collapsed ventillation shafts on the east side of the mine have resulted in 3 m diameter subsidence holes that are about 1.5 m deep. The collapsed ventilation shaft on the west side is only about 1 m across and .5 m deep. A partially collapsed powder magazine is located about 90 m southeast of the mine entrance. The structure is of similar construction to that of a root cellar with double entrance doors and dug into the ground with several feet of dirt over the roof. The feature that is a possible "well" consists of four posts set in a 1.5 square pattern. In the center of this square pattern of posts is an 1-1/4 inch pipe. Since water accumulates on this side of the mine it is likely that a windmill was used to pump out the water and the pipe and posts are the remains of this pumping system.

5.3 Artifacts (observed, collected):
Artifacts consist of abandoned farm machinery that have been placed immediately west of the mine entrance. The machines are binders, a manure spreader and plow parts. They are draft animal drawn type of machines.

5.4 Historical information and evaluation:
See attached.

5.5 References
(See Section 3.9)
Wood, Stanley 1987 Personal interview, May 7, north of Wibaux, Montana.

5.6 Subsurface testing, results, methods, etc.
None

The mine was started around 1935 and shut down in 1943. It operated during the winter months, employing three to four of the local farmhands. Emery ("E.B.") Stair operated the mine.

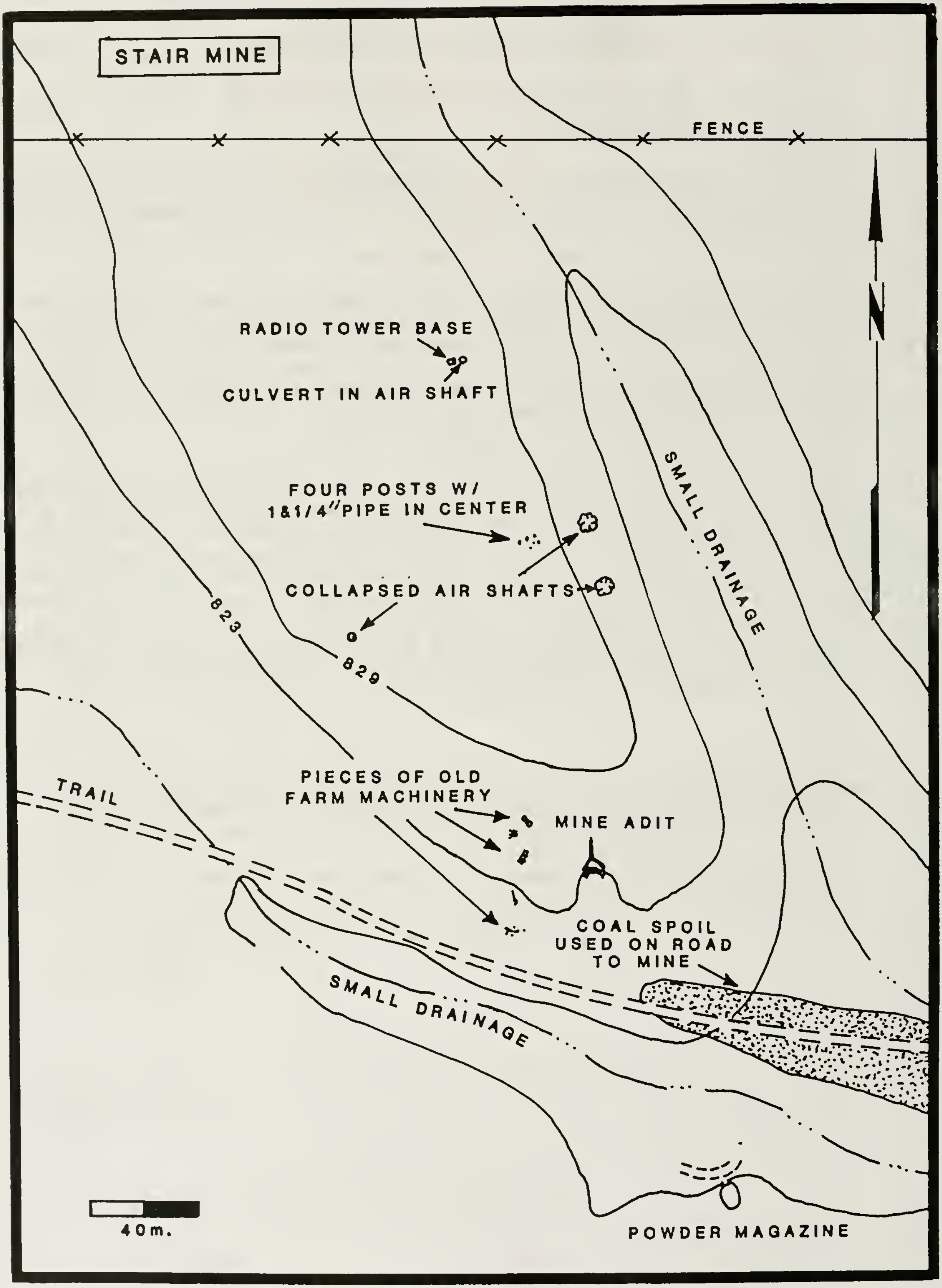
The mine extends about 600 feet back from the adit. The lower 10 feet of the 16-foot coal seam was mined with pillars of coal left for supports. The mine is not timbered. At first a horse was used to pull out the coal but later a Ford tractor and a two wheel cart were used.

For several years the mine was cited for safety violations. Stair reported to the current landowner, Stanley Wood, that the mine was issued citations by the mine inspector for storing the powder inside the mine in a room adjacent to the entrance. Stair said he built a powder magazine some distance from the mine but the inspector then cited the mine for having too high a level of carbon monoxide. The mine was ordered shut down until the situation was corrected but it never reopened.

Ironically, during the 1960s the mine was converted into the Wibaux County Civil Defense fallout shelter. The entrance was modified by installing a door and new timbers while two generators were placed further inside the mine. A culvert with a ladder inside was placed in one of the ventilation so it could be used as an escape route. Beside the ventilation shaft on the surface a radio tower was built. Since the mine is damp, with water standing on its east side, a pump was installed in hopes that this would help dry out the mine. After several years of trying to dry up the mine the project was abandoned. The two generators are still in the mine. The shelter was designed to handle 3500 people even though only 1800 people live in Wibaux County.

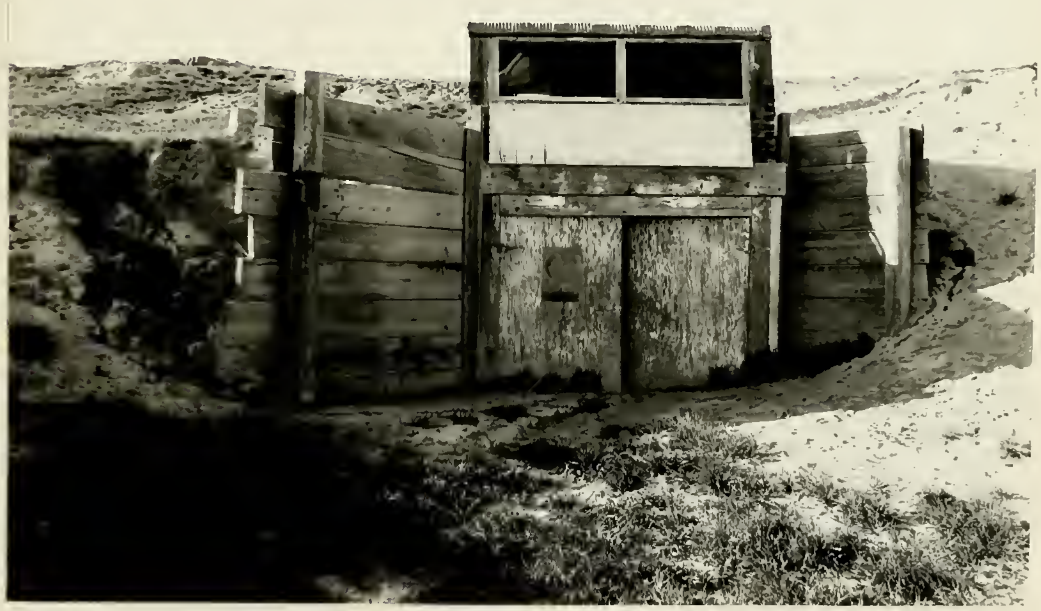
May (1954) took a coal sample from the innermost room, about 600 feet north of the mine mouth which showed medium heating value for lignite and a rather high ash and sulfur content. The high ash content was partly caused by the one-inch parting in the lower part of the coal bed.

[The above information is based on an interview with Stanley Wood (1987) who owns the property on which the Stair Mine is located.]



Site map of the Stair Mine.

Overview of Stair Mine (view north)



Adit at the Stair Mine (view north)